

BOTULISM, INFANT

What is infant botulism?

Infant botulism is a disease caused by a toxin produced when the intestines of very young children become infected by the bacteria, *Clostridium botulinum*.

Who gets infant botulism?

Children who get infant botulism are generally younger than six months old. The spores of *Clostridium botulinum* are common in soil, and can also be found in a variety of foods and in dust. Infant botulism has been associated with feeding contaminated honey (and rarely corn syrup) to infants, but not in children older than one year of age or in adults.

How is infant botulism spread?

Infant botulism is not contagious, and person-to-person transmission is not known to occur. An infant must eat the bacterial spores that then multiply and produce the toxin in the digestive tract.

What are the symptoms of infant botulism?

The initial symptoms of infant botulism are constipation and poor feeding, followed by listlessness and weakness that may be severe enough to make the baby appear "floppy."

How soon do symptoms appear?

The incubation period for infant botulism is unknown.

What is the treatment for infant botulism?

Hospital care is necessary. Neither antibiotics nor antitoxin have proven beneficial in treating infant botulism and may even make the illness worse. Most infants recover following supportive care in a hospital.

What happens if infant botulism is not treated?

Infant botulism may result in death.

How can botulism be prevented?

Identified sources of infant botulism, such as honey, should not be fed to infants.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal doctor
- Your local health department, listed in your telephone directory
- The Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF EPIDEMIOLOGY
August 2001